

## Equine Stem Cell Banking

Stem cells are increasingly becoming the treatment of choice for many equine injuries and illnesses that previously had a poor prognosis. One of the drawbacks of stem cell therapy has been the time delay between taking a bone marrow sample from the horse and being able to implant stem cells into the affected area (after the three week culture process). **VetCell's** equine stem cell banking service now offers owners a fast treatment option for horses and is something that vets should consider when preparing for the birth of a foal or for any surgical procedure on an adult horse. Stem cell banking allows for rapid supply of stem cells when they are needed which will give the horse the best chance of a successful recovery.

A recent study of **VetCell**-treated sport horses with superficial digital flexor tendon injuries has shown that the success of the treatment is dependent on the timescale between injury and implantation. The lowest rate of re-injury (4%) was obtained when treatment was delivered within one month of initial injury. Horses that had stem cells already banked would therefore be at a considerable advantage following an SDFT injury.

The RCVS has confirmed that taking bone marrow from horses under general anaesthetic or during other surgical procedures is permitted, even when it is not necessary for the horse at that time. Therefore horses can have a bone marrow aspiration done when they are undergoing other unrelated procedures. This sample can then be sent to **VetCell's** lab for the stem cells to be separated, cultured and cryogenically frozen, ready to be resuscitated quickly if they are needed in the future.

**VetCell**, together with its research partners, have also developed a procedure for separating and culturing mesenchymal stem cells from umbilical cord blood (UCB-MSCs). The sampling procedure is completely non-invasive and can be carried out by a competent horseperson at the time of foaling, following **VetCell's** simple training.

As well as the obvious benefits to having stem cells banked and the 'added extra' that brings when horses are sold on, owners of horses with **VetCell** certified stored MSCs may also benefit from reduced insurance premiums from leading equine insurance companies. David Ashby, MD of Amlin Plus says *'I'm happy to endorse **VetCell's** ideas. They are a very exciting development and we would certainly consider premium discounts for horse owners who use the service'*.

Equine stem cell banking offers vets and horse owners an advanced and efficient way of providing for the horse's future. Stem cells can already offer an excellent outcome for a number of injuries and illnesses and, with improvements in technology and new research, the opportunities will increase still further in years to come.

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